



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 SCENARIOS IN BUSINESSES

DHEC is providing this generalized guidance for use by employers and employees to determine the best practices to utilize in various scenarios involving COVID-19 in the workplace.

Scenario	Actions to Take
<p>POSITIVE</p> <p>Employee tests positive for COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell employee to stay home and recommend they contact their healthcare provider, if they have not already done so. • Contact HR, Employee Relations, or supervisor to begin the process of gathering necessary information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Date of onset of symptoms (if applicable) ○ Date and location where test specimen (swab) was collected ○ Date test results were received ○ Instructions provided by healthcare provider when test results were communicated ○ Whether the employee came in close contact¹ with any other employees or visitors from 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms (or specimen collection if they never have had symptoms) until they were sent home • Employee should remain out of work until they have recovered and met the criteria to return to work.² • Perform coworker exposure assessment and notify coworkers of close contact status or potential exposure and provide guidance as indicated.³ Maintain confidentiality when providing notifications. • The area where the infected employee worked should be cleaned and disinfected if the employee was there while contagious (from 48 hours prior to symptom onset, or specimen collection if never symptomatic, to at least ten days after symptom onset or specimen collection). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the business is not affiliated with the healthcare industry, they are not required to hire a specialized company for cleaning and disinfection. ○ See CDC Cleaning and Disinfection Guidance for additional information.



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 SCENARIOS IN BUSINESSES

<p>SICK BUT NO TEST</p> <p>Employee experiences symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (either calls out sick or is at work when they begin experiencing symptoms)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employee should be sent home and encouraged to get tested for COVID-19. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the employee tests positive, follow the steps listed in the “Employee tests positive for COVID-19” scenario above. ○ If the employee tests negative, and there is no known exposure to COVID-19, they may return to work when symptoms have resolved. ○ If the employee tests negative, and there is a possible exposure (not close contact, but other co-worker), employee may return to work when symptoms have resolved or if they have visited a health care provider and received an alternate diagnosis that would explain the symptoms. ○ If the employee does not get tested, they should be told to remain out of work until they have recovered and met criteria for release from isolation² as if they had tested positive.
<p>CLOSE CONTACT OF A CASE</p> <p>Employee has been in close contact¹ with someone (non-employee) or lives with someone who tests positive for COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the employee is fully vaccinated and has had a booster shot if eligible, or if they have been infected with COVID-19 in the previous 90 days, they don't have to quarantine, but must wear a mask around others for 10 days. DHEC recommends they get tested on Day 5 after exposure, unless they have a documented COVID-19 infection in the previous 90 days. • If the employee is not vaccinated, not fully vaccinated, or is fully vaccinated but has not gotten a booster shot if eligible, they need to quarantine for 5 days. They must wear a mask around others during the 5-day quarantine, and for 5 additional days. DHEC recommend they get tested on Day 5 after exposure, unless they have a documented COVID-19 infection in the previous 90 day. • The employee is encouraged to be tested at any time if they develop symptoms unless they have a documented COVID-19 infection in the previous 90 days. Those with an infection in the previous 90 days who develop new symptoms should be encouraged to consult their health care provider. • If the employee lives with someone who has COVID-19 and cannot completely separate from them, their quarantine starts on day 1 of the COVID-19 case's isolation, continues through the case's isolation period with an additional 5 days after the case ends isolation. They must continue to wear a mask around others through the duration of their quarantine, and for 5 additional days after leaving quarantine.



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 SCENARIOS IN BUSINESSES

<p>CLOSE CONTACT OF SOMEONE SICK (NO TEST)</p> <p>Employee has been in close contact¹ with someone (non-employee) or lives with someone who displays symptoms consistent with COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee may remain at work as long as they do not have symptoms while the ill person is tested and waiting on results. • If the ill person tests positive for COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Send employee home and follow the guidance in the section above.
<p>CONTACT OF A CONTACT</p> <p>Employee lives with someone who has been in close contact¹ with someone who displays symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee is considered a “contact of a contact.” • Employee may remain at work as long as they do not have symptoms. They do <u>not</u> need to be tested unless they develop symptoms. • Nothing further needs to be done unless the person with whom the employee lives or was a close contact develops symptoms or tests positive. • If the person they live with or had close contact with develops symptoms, send the employee home until it can be determined whether the symptoms are due to COVID-19. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the person they live with or had close contact with tests negative the employee may return to work. ○ If the person they live with or had close contact with tests positive for COVID-19, send the employee home and follow the guidance for employees who are close contacts of a positive person above. ○ If the employee volunteers to provide evidence that they are fully vaccinated, and boosted if eligible, or have been infected with COVID-19 in the previous 90 days, follow the guidance provided for that category of close contact in the section above.
<p>RESTAURANT PATRON</p> <p>Employee eats at a restaurant that later announces that an employee at the restaurant tested positive for COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee may remain at work as long as they do not have symptoms. They do <u>not</u> need to be tested unless they develop symptoms. • If the employee begins to display symptoms consistent with COVID-19, follow the steps above in the “Employee experiences symptoms consistent with COVID-19” scenario.



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 SCENARIOS IN BUSINESSES

¹Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of the other person for a period of more than 15 minutes in a 24-hour period.

²CDC and DHEC have issued guidance on when a person may be considered recovered. The criteria below should be used to determine eligibility to return to work. Negative tests results are not required.

1. 5 days have passed since their symptoms began, AND
2. They are free of fever (100.4° F [38° C] or greater using an oral thermometer) for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines, AND
3. Their other symptoms have improved.

Those who test positive but never have symptoms should stay out of work and self-isolate until five days after their test specimen was collected.

³Assessment and guidance for coworkers of someone who tests positive for COVID-19:

- A person infected with COVID-19 is considered contagious starting 48 hours prior to the onset of their symptoms (or two days before the specimen for the test was collected if they had no symptoms) until they are released from isolation (see criteria in footnote 2 above).
- Person not at work when contagious: No further steps need to be taken for coworkers if it is determined the COVID-19 case was not at work during their contagious period.
- Person at work while contagious:
 - Close contact: Anyone who spent 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period within six feet of the infected employee during their contagious period is considered a close contact. Recommendations vary differ depending on vaccination status. See scenarios described above.
 - Other coworkers who work in the same area as the infected person but are not close contacts should be notified of their potential exposure (while maintaining the infected person's confidentiality) and advised to self-monitor for signs or symptoms of COVID-19 for 10 days. This includes taking their temperature and assessing themselves for symptoms twice a day. A [monitoring worksheet](#) they may find helpful is available on the DHEC webpage. They do not need to quarantine or be tested unless they develop symptoms. Social distancing and mask wearing are even more important for these employees.



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 SCENARIOS IN BUSINESSES

Definitions

Close contact: Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes) from 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or specimen collection for an asymptomatic infected person) of the infected person.

Contact tracing: The practice of identifying, notifying, and monitoring individuals who may have had close contact with a person determined to be a confirmed or probable case of an infectious disease as a means of controlling the spread of infection.

Isolation: Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. They must remain at home or the place they were told to isolate and avoid contact with other people until their isolation period is over. This includes avoiding contact with those in their household as much as possible.

Fully vaccinated: A person who has completed their primary vaccine series (two doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of Janssen vaccine or the full series of a WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccine), including an additional dose if immunocompromised, with at least two weeks since their last dose.

Quarantine: Quarantine is used to separate people who are close contacts of someone with a contagious disease, like COVID-19, from others for a period of time to see if they become sick. This is a method to prevent the spread of disease. When someone is quarantining, they should stay home and avoid contact with other people until the quarantine period is over. This includes people in their household as much as it is possible.

Screening: Routine, typically performed at least once weekly, viral (PCR or antigen) testing of asymptomatic individuals in order to identify asymptomatic individuals infected with SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 SCENARIOS IN BUSINESSES

Notes:

- The CDC updated its webpage with [COVID-19 symptoms](#) as more is learned about the disease.
- The approach is the same for a person who tests positive but does not have symptoms as for a person who has symptoms and tests positive. The only difference is that the contagious period is considered to begin two days prior to the test specimen being collected rather than two days prior to symptoms beginning.
- [COVID-19 screening & testing sites](#) and [COVID-19 mobile testing clinics](#) are linked on the DHEC webpage. Please review the information about [testing types](#). DHEC and the CDC recommend molecular (PCR, or swab) testing for diagnosis of acute infection. Antibody testing should not be used alone for this purpose. The testing referenced in this guidance is the swab (molecular, or PCR) testing.

Other Resources:

- General
 - [Accelerate SC](#)
 - [Businesses and Employers](#) (DHEC)
 - [CDC](#)
 - [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (DHEC)
 - [OSHA](#)
 - [US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)
- Restaurants:
 - [Food Safety Operations and Re-Opening Toolkit](#) (DHEC)
 - [Opening Restaurants Phase Two Guidance](#) (SC Restaurant and Lodging Association)[Palmetto Priority](#)



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Guidance Updates

First posted: July 9, 2020.

Revised: July 25, 2020

- Updated in footnote 2 the duration a person must remain fever-free to be released from isolation, as CDC criteria changed from 3 days to 24 hours.

Revised August 10, 2021

- Updated guidance for fully vaccinated vs. not fully vaccinated employees
- Deleted reference to “critical infrastructure employees”
- Updated links to resources
- Added definitions

Revised October 19, 2021

- Changed testing recommendation for asymptomatic fully vaccinated close contact from 3-5 days after exposure to 5-7 days, consistent with change in CDC guidance.

Revised January 14, 2022

- Updated isolation and quarantine duration, testing, and masking recommendations based on COVID-19 vaccine history.